

Planning
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1st August 2025

Our Ref: 88117674/2/SVP/MH

Submitted via the Planning Portal Ref: PP-14161663

Dear Sir/Madam

UNITS 7 & 8 HERON INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, BASINGSTOKE ROAD, SPENCERS WOOD, RG7 1PJ
USE OF UNITS 7 & 8 AS WITHIN USE CLASS E(G)(III), B2 AND B8 AND SUBDIVISION
APPLICATION ON BEHALF OF HALLWAY PROPERTIES LIMITED

We act on behalf of Hallway Properties Limited ("Hallway"), the freehold owner and asset manager of the above Industrial Estate, including Units 7 & 8 ("the Site").

We have been instructed to submit this planning application for internal works to reinstate the previously existing division between Units 7 & 8, secure the use of the units for use within Use Class E(g)(iii), B2 and B8 and extend the operations of both units to 0700 to 2300 on Monday to Friday. No external works are proposed. These changes are necessary as the units are currently vacant and the additional use and extended hours are required to secure re-occupation by prospective tenants.

The description of development is as follows:

'Use of Units 7 & 8 as within Use Class E.(g)(iii), B2 and B8 and subdivision.'

In addition to this supporting statement, the application comprises the following:

- Application form signed and dated (Freeths, July 2025);
- CIL Form 1: Additional Information (Freeths, July 2025);
- Site Location Plan (b3 architects, 6138_P01 rev C);
- Existing Site Plan (b3 architects, 6138_P02 rev C);
- Proposed Site Plan (b3 architects, 6138_P03 rev C); and
- Noise Impact Assessment (Hawkins Environmental, 23 July 2025).

The appropriate application fee of £673.00 has been duly paid via the Planning Portal online. This has been calculated based on the application being for 'Other material change of use of a building or land'.

Site

The extent of the Site encompasses Units 7 and 8 as shown in red on the submitted Site Location Plan (Ref: 6138_P01 rev C).

Units 7 & 8 have a Gross Internal Area ("GIA") of 1,215 sqm and are part of the established Industrial Estate extending which extends to 0.84 hectares, with a total floorspace of 4,315 sqm across seven units. The buildings are of two-storey construction, featuring a combination of brickwork and cladding. Each unit benefits from dedicated pedestrian and vehicular access via separate reception entrances and roller shutters.

The units are arranged around a central shared service yard, with their principal elevations and entrances oriented inwards. Surface-level car parking is located to the rear of the units onto Basingstoke Road. The Estate provides 75 car parking spaces for use by occupiers, their staff and visitors and of these, 22 car parking spaces are allocated for Unit 8.

The Estate is currently fully occupied by a range of light/general industrial and storage users. It serves as a valuable source of commercial accommodation for both national and local businesses. Tenants are attracted to the Site due to its accessibility to a skilled local workforce and proximity to the M4 and wider strategic road network. We understand from the Applicant, that circa 75 people are employed on to the Site (full and part-time), with circa 25 people being local to Spencers Wood. The Site therefore plays a significant role as an economic and social asset for the settlement and the wider Borough.

The Site is well served by a range of transport options. The nearest public transport provision is a bus stop on Back Lane, located approximately 60 metres to the south, offering regular services to Reading and surrounding areas. Additionally, the Site lies within easy walking distance of local services and amenities available in Spencers Wood centre to the north.

Vehicular and pedestrian access to the Site is taken from Basingstoke Road, which functions as a key distributor road link within the Borough, connecting Spencers Wood and surrounding settlements, as well as direct access to the M4. The road is regularly used by industrial and commercial traffic during peak periods, consistent with its strategic role in the local transport network.

Planning History

Planning permission for Unit 7 & 8 was included in the application (Ref: 14664) for the redevelopment of the site to erect units, offices and car parking which was granted in December 1980.

Unit 8 was the subject of planning permission (Ref: F/2012/0938) for a change of use from B8 (storage and distribution) to allow either B8 or B2 (general industrial use). This was granted in July 2012.

The Site and Estate have been the subject of subsequent decisions and condition variations.

Operational Restrictions

Condition 12 of permission 14664 restricts the operational hours of the units forming the Estate to 0700-1800 Monday to Friday and 0700-1200 on Saturdays. No work is permitted on Sundays, public or bank holidays.

Condition 3 of planning permission F/2012/0938 states: “...the conditions imposed upon planning consent dated 30th December 1990 shall remain in full save in so far as they are expressly varied by this permission”. The permission includes an operational hours restriction that exactly matches Condition 12 of the December 1990 permission. Accordingly, this permission remains the operational permission for the purposes of this planning application and is the subject of the proposed amendment.

For reference, Unit 3 was the subject of a specific revised operational hours approval extending this to 1930 hours during weekends under Planning Permission Ref: 18634 (VAR) dated 21st January 1983.

Section 73 – Variation to Condition 12

A Section 73 application (Ref: 242575) was submitted in October 2024 for:

‘Application to vary condition 12 of planning consent 14664 for the retention of the existing building and development of the remainder of the site with Class III units and offices and Class X units with car parking. Condition 12 refers to the operational hours of the units forming the Industrial Estate and the variation is to extend the operational hours of Units 7 and 8 to 0500-2300 from Monday to Friday (the weekend and Bank Holiday hour restrictions will be unchanged).’

This was refused on 5th December 2024 as it was considered that the proposed extension of operating hours between 0500 and 2300 on weekdays would result in noise impacts from Units 7 and 8 that would harm the residential amenity of nearby properties, including Field View, The Garage, and Amersham which would be in conflict with Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3, MDD Local Plan Policies CC06 and TB20 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

It should be noted that page 10 of the Officer’s report (5 December 2024) for application 242575 acknowledges that extending the operational hours between 6pm-11pm would not adversely harm nearby residential receptors.

Proposal

Use of Units within E(g)(iii), B2 and B8.

The existing units benefit from B2 and B8 use as permitted by permission F/2012/0938. It is proposed to seek the acceptability of Units 7 & 8 as within Use Class E(g)(iii). This will give the Applicant greater flexibility to lease the units to a broader range of potential tenants whilst still safeguarding nearby amenity as is the nature of uses within E(g)(iii).

Subdivision of Units 7 & 8

The proposal includes internal works necessary to reinstate the partition between Units 7 & 8. As seen in the Proposed Site Plan (Ref: 6138/P03 rev A), a wall is proposed to separate the units internally. This will allow for the Applicant to create a more attractively sized unit for potential tenants thereby increasing the likelihood of leasing both units.

Extension to Operational Hours

This application proposes to extend the operational hours of Units 7 & 8 to allow operation between 0700 to 2300 on Monday to Friday in accordance with The World Health Organisation (“WHO”) daytime hours guideline. The weekend and Bank Holiday hours restrictions will be unchanged.

This represents an extension to the existing restriction which currently allow for operation between 0700 to 1800 Monday to Friday. It is proposed that the existing operating hours for the weekends, 0700 to 1200 on Saturday, remain as is.

Unit 7 and 8 are currently vacant as the previous tenant needed to be able to operate for extended hours but this was not possible as a result of the refusal of application 242575. The proposal will seek to make the occupation of these units increasingly attractive for prospective and contribute to maintain their function and economic viability.

Planning Policy Context

The Development Plan for the Site comprises of the Wokingham Core Strategy (“CS”) (2010), Managing Development Delivery Document (“MDD”) (2014) and the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2017).

WBC have been in the process of preparing the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040, which when adopted, will replace the CS and MDD. It was submitted for examination on 28th February 2025 with adopted expected in May 2026. It is expected that limited weight can be attributed to the policies therein.

The Proposals Map confirms the Site lies within the Development Limits (Policy CC02) of Spencers Wood and within a wider consultation area for development in vicinity of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (“AWE”), Burghfield (Policy TB04). The Site is not allocated or designated for employment use and falls outside the identified Core Employment Areas.

The Site lies in Flood Risk Zone 1. There are no identified heritage assets on the site or nearby. The Site is not in an AQMA. There is no record of any TPOs.

Planning Assessment

Principle

Policy CP1(1) supports development only where it maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy requires that development be appropriate in terms of scale, activity, massing, layout, built form, height, materials and overall character relative to its surroundings. It must also be of high-quality design and avoid causing harm to the amenities of neighbouring land uses and occupiers.

Policy CP15 states that development outside of the designated Core Employment Areas, but within development limits, the redevelopment, refurbishment, or minor extension of existing employment buildings is acceptable in principle.

Policy CC01 of the MDD states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Site is located within an established industrial park and are already built units that have been in longstanding use.

The proposed introduction of E(g)(iii) aligns with the existing B2 and B8 industrial-related uses and given the requirement of E(g)(iii) to be acceptable in residential areas without detriment to neighbouring amenity. As such, the proposed use is considered in accordance with Policy CP3.

The internal works to subdivide the units are to a building outside a Core Employment Area and provide no exterior visual changes from the existing and there are therefore considerable accepted in principle under Policy CP15 and CP3.

Residential Amenity

MDD Local Plan TB20 states that planning permission will only be granted for commercial development proposals throughout the Borough that demonstrate:

- a) There is no harmful impact on the amenity of adjoining land uses in terms of noise, fumes and disturbance
- b) There is no significant impact on highway safety
- c) There is no significant adverse visual impact
- d) There is no significant adverse environmental impact

Policy CC06 of the MDDLDP relates to noise. It states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) from noise impacts in line with Appendix 1 of the MDD.

A Noise Impact Assessment (Hawkins Environmental, July 2025) has been prepared to support this application. It states that the rating sound level has been calculated to be up to 11 dB(A) above the background sound level at the closest dwelling – Amersham, situated along Basingstoke Road. Given the existing context of the industrial estate including absolute sound levels, sound characteristics, internal ambient noise levels at nearby noise-sensitive receptors, and other mitigating factors, it is concluded that the increase in operating hours is unlikely to result in noise complaints.

Page 10 of the Officer's report (5 December 2024) for application 242575 acknowledges that extending the operational hours between 6pm-11pm would not adversely harm nearby residential receptors. It states:

'It should be noted that the Council do not consider there to be an adverse impact on the neighbouring properties as a result of the extension to the operating hours between 6pm and 11pm; the nearest receptors are already subject to noise from existing E, B2 and B8 uses during these daytime hours (which WHO recognise extends to 11:00pm), meaning the extending the hours until 11:00pm would not adversely harm the adjoining occupiers.'

As the proposal extends the operational hours on weekdays from finishing at 1800 to the proposed time of 2300, it is in accordance with the WHO guidelines, the principle of which has already been accepted within the case officer's previous assessment. There has been no change in the context since that assessment which would otherwise change the conclusion.

It is therefore considered that the extension of hours is in accordance with Policy CP1 and CP3 of the CS and CC06 and TB20 of the MDD.

Transport & Access

No additional floorspace is proposed and the existing Estate already has an established and satisfactory access and lighting arrangement. On this basis, it is considered that the proposed hours increase will have no adverse impact on highway safety.

The Estate is supported by an existing car park for tenants and visitors. As part of the pre-application undertaken on the previous proposal, it was accepted by the Council's Highways team that as there is no increase in floorspace nor material change in traffic generation, there is no need to review parking provision.

Flood Risk & Drainage

The Site and access are both situated within Flood Risk Zone 1. The proposed internal works, uses and extension of operating hours will not increase flood risk and/or impact sustainable drainage methods. Therefore, it is considered that the proposals are in accordance with planning policy and guidance.

Contamination

The pre-application advice received from WBC stated that the Site is listed as a potentially contaminated within the Council's inventory. Given that the internal works include no invasive ground works, it is considered that assessment of ground conditions is not required.

Parking

As seen in Existing Site Plan (Ref: 6138/P02 rev A), there are 22 existing vehicle parking spaces allocated within the industrial estate for users of the existing unit. No change in provision is proposed apart from the indicative allocation of 11 parking spaces each for Unit 7 & 8 as shown in Proposed Site Plan (Ref: 6138/P03 rev A). On the basis that parking will not materially change, it is considered the proposal is acceptable in this respect.

Detailed Emergency Planning Zone

The Site is located within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone in relation to the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield. The proposal will not increase employment on-site as existing employees will operate during the extended hours. The introduction of proposed Use Class E(g)(iii) will not impact the number of employees as it solely provides flexibility for what the unit can be used for. On this basis, there is no requirement for an end user emergency and construction phase emergency plan as required by MDD Policy TB04.

The above assessment demonstrates that the proposal is considered to be acceptable against the Development Plan and NPPF in all other respects.

Conclusion

This application seeks permission for internal works to reinstate the previously existing division between Units 7 & 8, secure the use of the units for use within Use Class E(g)(iii), B2 and B8 and extend the operations of both units to 0700 to 2300 on Monday to Friday and maintain the current weekend and bank holiday as existing.

The units are currently vacant and the proposal aims to enhance their appeal to prospective tenants to support their continued function and the economic viability of the wider industrial estate.

Our assessment of the proposal concludes that it is acceptable in land use terms and in accordance with policies related to neighbouring amenity.

As the scheme is considered in accordance with the Development Plan and there are no material considerations to indicate otherwise, the proposal should be granted planning permission without delay.

We trust that the above justification and submitted material is sufficient to positively consider this application. We look forward to receiving the validation letter and timescales for approval. In the meantime, should you require any additional information or wish to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact either Mark Harris (mark.harris@freeths.co.uk) or myself.

Yours faithfully

This letter is approved but unsigned.

Stephan Vargas-Pritchard
Associate
Planning and Environment
Freeths LLP

Please respond by e-mail where possible

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